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# NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

## Southern Africa

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SOUTHERN AFRICA

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*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:*

The Central Intelligence Agency, the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Agency.

**Concurring:**

The Acting Deputy to the Director of Central Intelligence for the Intelligence Community,  
Acting Vice Chairman

The Acting CIA Member representing the Central Intelligence Agency

The Director of Intelligence and Research representing the Department of State

The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

The Director, National Security Agency

The Special Assistant to the Secretary for National Security, Department of the Treasury

The Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

The Deputy Assistant Administrator for National Security, Energy Research and Development

**Abstaining:**

None

**Also Participating:**

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

Potential changes in the hitherto dominant positions of the white racial communities in South Africa, Rhodesia, and Namibia are once again subjects for intense debate and arduous international negotiation. The debate is not new; the negotiations and the pressures that these negotiations reflect and that accompany them are, if not entirely unprecedented, at least new in the far-ranging character of their objectives: majority rule in Rhodesia and Namibia, and some form of power-sharing with the black majority in South Africa.

This paper focuses on South Africa. It attempts to locate the sources of potential change among the major elements of South African society, to gauge both their strength and the malleability of the existing political and economic structure under internal stresses and external pressures, and to make a current estimate of what kinds of change might occur during the next three to five years. The paper also discusses the impact of developments in Rhodesia and Namibia on those in South Africa, and in the course of this discussion offers an assessment of how the Rhodesian and Namibian situations appear to be moving.

Against this background, our principal judgments are as follows:

## South Africa

- The white community, despite its internal divisions, will not be prepared within the period of this Estimate to make significant concessions in the direction of power-sharing with the black majority.
- Even movement in the direction of reducing the more petty manifestations of racial discrimination will come slowly, because no white South African government can afford to move very far ahead of the dominant prejudices of the white community as a whole, although domestic and international pressures may speed the process to some degree.
- In the economic arena, while absolute improvements in the material well-being of those blacks who are employed will occur gradually during the period of this Estimate, as they have at periods in the past, there will be a serious and growing problem of black unemployment due to a combination of demographic developments and the inherited body of white-imposed custom and legislation which denies economic opportunity to blacks and keeps the purchasing power of the black community low.

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- The protest efforts of the black communities will not produce significant changes in the South African political and economic system within the period of this Estimate. But they have already begun to produce a change in the political climate which may have considerable long-range significance. These protests, which almost certainly will take the form of sporadic outbreaks of widespread disorder and urban terrorism as well as strikes and other nonviolent demonstrations, will create an atmosphere of heightened racial tension. Thus the next three to five years, unlike the 1965-75 decade of quiescence, is likely to be a period of increasing pressures for change, marked by intensified debate within South Africa over the government's racial policy.
- The resources available to the South African government for resisting change will remain formidable during the period of this Estimate, and we believe white South Africans will be able to cope with any physical challenge they are likely to face. The armed forces are well trained, well equipped, and because they are overwhelmingly white, share the outlook of the white community as a whole. The police, although they are nearly half nonwhite, do not yet show significant cracks in morale or effectiveness. While we expect that black policemen in some areas will come under stress, the government has foreseen this and is preparing for it.
- The South African armed forces also remain by far the most effective military establishment in black Africa, and will have nothing to fear from the regular military establishments of other African countries, either singly or in combination. They will also contain any likely guerrilla effort from outside the country.
- The South African economy is relatively resistant to international economic sanctions, and will remain so for the period of this Estimate even in the unlikely event that such sanctions received widespread international support. The government has prepared for the possibility of sanctions by stockpiling, and the impact of sanctions would be to slow growth, and thus to deny what white South Africans have come to regard as normal expectation, rather than to bring the whites to their knees. Blacks would feel the material impact of sanctions far more than whites, and this might further fuel protest movements. Sanctions thus will be more effective in their political and psychological aspects than as economic warfare measures during the next three to five years.
- The one area in which South Africans appear to be especially sensitive to pressures for change is in their strong desire to be accepted as members of the Western community. Yet, their relative isolation and identification as the pariah of the Western

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world have discomfited, but not induced significant change amongst the South African whites. In the short run at least, we believe that the chances are that the South Africans will dig in their heels in resisting pressures for significant internal change. We cannot judge at this time what the impact of persistent Western pressure would be over the long term in building up or breaking down South African resistance to change.

## Rhodesia

- Rhodesia will achieve majority rule during the period of this Estimate, but the effects of this on developments within South Africa during this period will be marginal. The longer term effects of how majority rule is introduced to Rhodesia will be substantial on South Africa's regional relationships, however. A relatively moderate, cooperative government in Zimbabwe would likely offer South Africa a fresh opportunity to attempt, especially in economic relationships, a policy of "opening to the north" from which both Zimbabwe and South Africa would derive substantial material benefits. If, on the other hand, an independent Zimbabwe becomes an arena for the rivalries that now plague the nationalist movement, it is likely to emerge eventually as a militant confrontation state. The importance of economic ties with South Africa, however, would probably act as a restraint on Zimbabwe's aggressiveness.

## Namibia

- There are signs, developed by the efforts of the UN Contact Group, that South Africa is making a major reassessment of its strategy toward and its future relationship with Namibia. We think that the South Africans believe that arrangements can be made that protect their essential interests. They hope to retain both profitable economic and useful defense ties with an independent Namibia. If their hopes turn out to be illusory, we think that the South Africans would still find it difficult to disengage from the negotiation process, given the presumable consequences for their relations with the West. We are unable to agree, however, on the strength of South Africa's determination to preserve a military position in Namibia and full sovereignty over Walvis Bay. Certainly, during the course of the negotiations and transition period, the South Africans will continue to reassess their options.

## Communist Factors in Southern Africa

- We doubt that the Soviets will engage in any radically new types of activity during the next three to five years. The central

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features of the Soviet presence in southern Africa will continue to be the provision of military hardware and training to black liberation movements and to new black governments, together with vigorous diplomatic support in international forums. The Soviets will avoid being placed in situations where they might be called upon to furnish troops—other than advisers—of their own, although they are likely to continue to make use of gunboat diplomacy when the risks are low.

- Cuba will continue to collaborate with the USSR in policy toward southern Africa. Castro regards this arena as one in which his broader international interests find room to play, but financial and logistical constraints, as well as ideological affinity, will keep him close to the USSR here. Castro is not likely to send Cuban troops into action directly against South Africans in Namibia nor in offensive operation into Rhodesia, although they may come to operate defensively in the latter situation.
- China will remain active in this region; some Chinese effort will go toward supporting the liberation movements and the front-line states, primarily to compete with the Soviets. The Chinese are at a disadvantage, however, in competing with the Soviets because of their inability to meet the military needs of the front-line states.

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